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A LESSON IN GEOGRAPHY.*
TO CHILDREN OF ALL AGES.

BY MISS S. F. STEAD.

At the outset I wish to state what will shortly be obvious to all my readers, that I have taken a liberty with my title in favour of the larger treatment in a general scheme for the teaching of Geography, because I consider that it will be more helpful to embrace many lessons than to treat of one only. The general scheme which I am about to set before you I should consider sufficient material for twelve months' teaching.

Shall I be considered very bold in asserting that Geography suffers more at the hands of its teachers than any other subject? But everyone considers that no one can do justice to his or her particular hobby excepting him or herself. As for teaching it, the enthusiastic teacher knows that there is not another who can handle History, Mathematics, Literature, French, German, or Geography so well as he. And, in fact, those who would teach must live and move in the subject before they can properly impart it to others: for what life can there be in lists, names of mountains, heights of peaks, lengths of rivers, depths of oceans—mere names and measurements, nothing more.

I have seen a small boy learning from his geographical text book—"England is a country of many rivers. The Thames, 215 miles, is the largest, the Severn, 240 miles, is the longest; the third longest river in England is the Trent, 180 miles, the fourth is the Yorkshire Ouse, 150 miles, the fifth longest river is the Great Ouse, 145 miles," and so on, learning his lesson in preparation for class the next day, and forgetting more rapidly than he could learn. Feeling sorry for him, and even more so for my pet subject, I took the same lesson and made it live for him by means of pictures and stories. We journeyed to the source of the river Thames, through our corn growing county of Essex; through Kent, the orchard of England, lingering to look at the hop gatherers, busy as bees among the hop poles; over the heath-clad downs of Surrey, away into Middlesex to London, that magic

*Paper read before the Southport branch of the Parents' National Educational Union.

world of our childhood! We stood on the busy wharf, examined great bales of wool and learned how they had come all the way from Australia, talked of sheep runs and squatters in that mysterious land where summer is winter and winter is summer. In Hertfordshire the sound of St. Albans carried us back to the time of the Wars of the Roses, and that interest sufficed for the journey through the pastoral country of Buckinghamshire, through Berkshire to Windsor Castle itself. In Oxfordshire the names of our greatest men became real to the child, ceasing to be mere names when associated with the colleges and the river and boats. Leaving Oxfordshire, and passing into Gloucestershire, we climbed the Cotswold hills and imagined the tiny streamlets flowing down to feed the Thames, explaining to the child the term "affluent" from the Latin *ad fluo*, to flow to, or towards, and shewing him the chief of these streams, the Isis. I told him how the streams owe their origin to the sun and the rain; how, after the streamlets have grown larger and larger for forty-five miles, the river is big enough for ships; explaining the term navigable, and telling somewhat of the trade carried on by this the largest English river, which, from the tiny stream in the Cotswold hills until it has reached the North Sea, has flowed over 215 miles of country. So with the Yorkshire Ouse: I took him through the busy manufacturing towns right to the Pennine chain, and then had a good opportunity of teaching the meaning of a water-parting in the parting of the rivers of the N.E. from those of the N.W. of England. Heights, lengths, breadths and depths are, I do not deny, of the greatest importance and must be learned, but do not let us present them in unmitigated dry, dreary dulness.

Geography rightly understood is the study of the world, its history and its geology: in a word, all there is of interest upon the globe—the work of nature and the work of man. While the children are very young may we not teach them great facts in geology by the exercise of a little tact and skill. Thus, for instance, throwing upon the screen a map of the world as the children know it in their atlases—and let me beg my readers never to attempt either the teaching or learning of geography without the best of atlases—we may teach the children that, once upon a time, there was no Behring Strait, but a great block of land, snow and ice extending from the Arctic regions into the centre of Europe and America, burying the north of

Europe, filling up the Baltic Sea and the North Sea, spreading over the place of the Pennine Chain, covering the greater part of Wales, and stretching even to where London now stands; we may trace how very gradually the ice moved towards the north, leaving remnants in Europe in the snow-fields and glaciers of Switzerland, Norway and the Pyrenees—of course, explaining that a glacier is a great ice river, formed by the pressure of snow into ice on the mountains and high lands, thousands of feet above the sea, which gradually slides down to the valley below, and there in the warmer regions, its edges being melted, often forms streams and rivers. The picture of the Mer de Glace forms a good illustration, and when we note that it moves at the rate of from 18 to 25 inches a day, by measuring this out on a table we shall be able to give the children a dim idea of the length of time that must have elapsed before the huge ice sheet covering Britain gradually travelled westward, leaving our land free at last. From this we can lead the children to consider the making and breaking of the coast line in England. Let us away down to Cornwall to see how the waves break on the Scilly Isles, those isles to which in olden days the Phœnicians came for stores from the rich tin mines of Cornwall, those islands where now we grow such wealth of spring flowers, those islands of which we read such thrilling stories of smuggling days, and find the counterpart of the horrors on the Breton coast, where the people are akin to our own Cornishmen. Another picture gives a peep of the Cornish coast in the rocks known as Bedruthen Steps. In Mount St. Michael we have a touch of history, and while we tell how by the constant beating of the waves for long years it has been cut off from Cornwall and made into an island, we also point out how after the Norman Conquest it was made a chapel to the Abbey of Mont St. Michel in Normandy; we tell how Perkin Warbeck held it, how later, in Charles I. time, it was held for the Royalists, but taken in 1646 by the Parliamentarians; now at the present day the monastic remains are converted into a country seat. Coming round to the Isle of Wight we have a good illustration of the breaking up of the coast in the Needles at the western extremity of the island. On the eastern side the coast of England is much less broken because of the calm of the North Sea, which is almost a lake, yet the quiet persistent washing of its waters wears the coast,

as shewn in the Great Cave in Flamborough Head. Cave! what a word to conjure by! what tales we can tell of the cave-dwellers, of pirates and smugglers, worthy of Victor Hugo himself. Take a child, even in imagination, into this cave—for let us not forget we are teaching in presence of a lantern—and shew the scoring by ice and wearing by sea, and he will not forget what a cave is like. Another picture gives us the headland of Flamborough on the Yorkshire coast, where lie our cod fisheries, haddock, herring, whiting and soles, most of the fish caught being sent right away to the London markets. A child is taught that a *cape* or *headland* is “land jutting out into the sea”; what idea does this bare fact convey? Little or none, unless we can show some pictures in illustration of the definition.

If we like to make a lesson in geology we can tell of the different layers of rock and how they have been laid down, and of how the weather has worn them away. For the present purpose we should throw on the screen a picture taken from Ireland, county Antrim, that long narrow plateau ending abruptly in the precipice of Fair Head, known also as Benmore Head, the soft chalk face of which gives endless material for lessons of all kinds. On the opposite side of the county Antrim, there is a complete change, a magical change, to hard basaltic rocks—rocks made by very ancient volcanic outbursts. This suggests that we should explain to our children what a volcano is. We may tell them of the Giants' Causeway, carry them across to the western side of Scotland and shew them the Hebrides, Orkneys and Shetlands, tell them how once these were part of the mainland, and that Ireland was once joined to Scotland. We will shew the Island of Staffa and its great cave, Fingal's cave, which probably gains its name from those Northmen, Vikings from Denmark, who, towards the middle of the ninth century established themselves permanently in Ireland, settling chiefly in the neighbourhood of Dublin, where the remembrance of one branch of the colony is still kept green in the name given to the adjacent district, namely Fingall, a name which is probably derived from Fine gall, “the stranger clan,” or “Fin-gall,” “white stranger,” an epithet which was possibly given by reason of some peculiarity in dress or armour. About ten years later a fresh fleet of Northmen appeared on the Irish coast, to whom native chronicles have given the

name Du-gall—black strangers. Driven from their settlements the Fingall collected in great numbers to re-assert their lost ascendancy, but after a severe battle they were defeated; the new comers subsequently visited Scotland, their leader devoting an entire summer, so it is affirmed, to the extirpating of the hostile Vikings from the creeks and bays in which they had sought refuge.

Further, on the same principle, the children may be interested and instructed in our foreign possessions, our colonies, and dependencies, with the purpose of inciting them in the future, not to the acquisition of more territory, but to the retaining and perfecting of that which we have, and to the keeping up of our good name. What more fascinating than to trace the discovery of Australia by the names which we find in our map:—Dirk Hartog Island, named after the Dutch captain who sailed so far down the western coast in 1616; six years later another Dutch captain reached a point quite S.W. and called it after his ship *Leuwin* (lioness): the children will eagerly trace the coastline and find this to be the most S.W. point of Australia. Before the end of the year 1627 the S.W. corner had been turned by a Dutch vessel, the *Golden Sea Lion*, and in honor of a distinguished passenger the captain named the coast now discovered *Nuyts Land*: it lies along the Great Australian Bight. *Tasman's* discovery remains in the name *Tasmania*. *Torres*, a Spaniard, being the first to pass through the Strait separating New Guinea from Queensland gave his name to the "strip of water separating two portions of land and joining two larger portions of water." *Dampier*, a bold Englishman, sailed along the western coast northwards, immortalizing himself in what we know as *Dampier Land*; then we get Captain *Cook's* discovery of the eastern side, and his taking possession of it in the name of Britain, calling it *New South Wales*, landing in an inlet fringed by strange plants, the like of which he had never beheld, and so christening the inlet *Botany Bay*. So, on we can go weaving a very fairy tale for the little students, of the discovery of gold by those traders who bartered their merchandise for land, set up their tents, found gold, dug for it, traded with it, until as time went on their little settlement grew into what is now the great city *Melbourne*.

(To be continued)

ON CITY COMPANIES.*

BY MISS C. F. YONGE.

"Busy companies of men."—*Andrew Marvell*.

THE yearly pageant on November 9th of the Lord Mayor's Show is considered by most people a thing to be seen at least once, a sort of chronic curiosity in the way of shows, with its elephants and horses in gay trappings, and its quaint chariots on which are perched representatives of the old traders and guild merchants; its knights in armour, some of which is cumbersome enough to remind one of James I.'s remark on a certain suit of mail, that "it was an admirable invention which preserved a man from being injured, and made him incapable of injuring anyone else"; also, last but not least part of the entertainment, its gaily-dressed circus ladies, who add variety to the scene. To many persons the Lord Mayor's Day is an amusing opportunity of penetrating into the unknown City, and they go to some friend's office, from whose windows they can look on luxuriously, and at their ease, at the procession as it slowly files past; the friend has the unaccustomed interest of being "at home" to his society acquaintances, instead of to his usual business clients, and of providing the former with a big spread in the way of a lunch. It is a very grand day in the eyes of foreigners, who regard the Lord Mayor as second only to the Queen, and to the English populace it is a "gaze" which they would not miss for a great deal, and for the sight of which they wait for hours, the crowds getting gradually denser, and encroaching on the road; it is then worth while to watch the well-trained horses of the mounted police gently backing the mob so as to make them keep to the pathway. One pities the children, who get tired, hungry, and pushed about for an interminable time before their

* A paper for the holidays.